



Volume 10 Issue 2 August 2013

P.I.G. OPENS DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY IN RED WING

No one knows if P.I.G. can fly, but it is well situated high above the Mississippi River, by Diamond Bluff outside of Hager City, Wis.

But, people do know that the company formerly known as Paul's Industrial Garage has taken off since its purchase by Dave Deml in 1999. Steady annual growth has led to a staff of 20, plus six from ProAct.

Deml said he could not be more pleased with ProAct's teams. "The reason I would recommend ProAct is one word, reliable," he said. "I know they will show up."



P.I.G. owner Dave Deml is very pleased with the reliability and thoroughness of ProAct's team.

The labor is challenging. Workers sort through a small mountain of recycled products from Pierce County communities and place them in the correct bins for processing. "It is the most basic recycling sorting you can get," said Deml, who hopes to add advanced sorting machinery in the future.

Reports from the materials processing station find the sorted products "very clean," and Deml could not be happier. "They are sorting as much as anyone could ... no one else has done it better." The owner recently added two more crew members and increased wages.

Pointing to an almost empty garbage

dumpster, Deml said this represented the landfill-bound material after three weeks of work. The rest would be recycled. He said ProAct is a very valuable business partner.

The ProAct job coach, Pete Quist, said his crew can focus and stick with the work better than "most guys off the street."

"It is really a team effort," said the coach, who was hired specifically for this account. "Some of the individuals are not used to being part of a team." Quist has persisted in seeking teamwork, helping with the physical challenge of the work and potential material hazards. "I am very



Job coach Pete Quist, at right, and Mike Halpaus take on the physical challenge on top of "Trash Mountain," as they sort through recyclable products to get them into the right bins.

proud of this team and how the individuals have stepped up to work together."

The setting is a new custom-built pole barn for sorting. Two sort stations were developed, one at the base of "Trash Mountain," so named by the team, and the other at a bin and conveyor bench. The goal is to sort all recyclable materials into large dumpsters by group (glass, aluminum cans, plastic, etc.) The stations work independently

See Recycling opportunity, page 2



The team of six recyclers and a job coach attend to a conveyor belt and hopper to sort a wide variety of recyclable products. Every cleared mound means less garbage for the landfill.



Operations Coordinator Tim Hovey, with Mark Rabe, replaces lids for a customer order.

Inside:

- 'Aussies' and animals
- Artist's work to market
- Big growth in Vocational

QUALITY CONTROL EXPERT MOVES IN

Quality products create a reputation, and ProAct now has added systems and standards expert Tim Hovey to improve production in Red Wing.

From inventory intake to delivery, Hovey will look carefully at how ProAct handles each customer's order. His background with restaurant, retail and manufacturing firms taught him that when

good systems are in place, mistakes are minimized. He recalls when Toys 'R' Us asked managers to throw out old procedures and to start over and simplify. At Wendy's restaurants, owner Dave Thomas' mottos were "Keep It Simple," and "Do It Right Every Day."

When working for Steinwell, a plastics injection molding company in Minneapolis, his quality concerns started with one shift, then two, then three and he soon became the director of operations.

"I got chosen for the job because I am good at operations and good at minding the store," said Hovey. "I have always been a fix-it guy." With injection moldings he worked closely with a disability

See Quality Control, page 3

GROUP WORK ON DISPLAY AT GRAFIX

Checking for quality and cleaning polyurethane letters for Select Comfort store displays, a ProAct crew of seven coordinated their tasks and focused on efforts to prepare 1,800 sets. Donning Grafix Shoppe printed shirts, the group blends nicely with the company's teams.

After some six months at the weekday work enclave, Grafix Production Manager Ryan Donovan said employees don't see the crew members as people with disabilities.

Controller and Human Resources Manager Shannon Serafin said the



Grafix staff members, Ryan Donovan, center, and Shannon Serafin, right, with ProAct's William Ruse, who is performing quality checks on letters created for Select Comfort.

personalities of ProAct's people are flourishing in the company's environment. "What was life like before ProAct?" she asks, with a grateful tone. While completing the work and fitting in, ProAct has helped reduce the company's overtime burden, as well.

The HR professional has taken a particular interest in ProAct's William Ruse, who



See Strong partnership, page 2

VOLUNTEERS CONNECT, SPAN GENERATIONS

Michael Becker wears a green shirt with a recognizable cartoon character at Gigi's Playhouse in St. Louis Park. "The kids like this stuff. They like Mickey Mouse," said Becker, who attends ProAct and volunteers at the drop-in activity center that opened earlier this year. "It's fun seeing the kids."

Becker and other individuals with a disability are making special connections with infants and kids up to 5 years of age, many of them with Down Syndrome.

ProAct Case Manager Stephanie Podkopacz, who



Michael Becker gets involved with child's play at Gigi's Playhouse. He also enjoys picking up after the children.



Case Manager Stephanie Podkopacz, above right, visits with Angela Lopez and her son, William at Gigi's Playhouse in St. Louis Park.

accompanies participants on the visits, has found a healthy mix of personalities. Some interact very well with the children, others talk to the parents and still others enjoy organizing and picking up after the kids. "There's a good little mix of jobs going on there," she said.

One mother, Erin Hernandez, brings her toddler-aged son, Rodrigo, for the open play time and for a two and under class. She seemed very comfortable. "I've been around kids with disabilities all my life. It's nice to learn the different

See Gigi's Playhouse, page 3

From the President...

While we enjoy our all too short Minnesota summer, there is also an opportunity to consider our progress. ProAct finished a successful 2012-2013 program year, having served about 1,000 clients during that time.

We continue to add jobs in the community, which is a priority in our efforts to provide employment opportunities. The chance to learn and earn in community settings is appreciated by our clients, and the satisfaction of the companies that employ them is very important to us.



Community experiences may also include volunteer activities, and an innovative setting in St. Louis Park has fast become a favorite for ProAct clients. Gigi's Playhouse, discussed in a story elsewhere in this issue, provides a pre-school experience for youngsters with disabilities.

While the aromas from summer grilling are still wafting in the air, including those from ProAct's cookouts for clients, we look ahead to upcoming activities. A peak of summer fun is ProAct's golf tournament, slated for

Monday, August 19, at the scenic and convenient Hastings Country Club. This is ProAct's only fundraising event of the year and everyone has a good time. I hope you and your associates can join us for a great day of golf, camaraderie and a tantalizing dinner.

When we move into fall ProAct will again host client banquets for participants in Eagan and Hudson at the Prom Center Ballroom in Oakdale, and for Red Wing and Zumbrota at Treasure Island Resort and Casino in Red Wing.

My thanks to our employees and board members for all of their contributions, to our valued supporters, and to our clients, the reason for ProAct to exist. We appreciate you all.

Sincerely,

Steven Ditschler

Recycling opportunity, from page 1

until Trash Mountain is cleared of all recyclable products. Then workers collect the paper and cardboard for bundling.

Quist jokingly recalled his spill into Trash Mountain, when he fell head first with his legs up in the air.

Each week the teamwork improves and Quist's designated leaders take on more responsibility. "They have really stepped up to work together," he said.

The team celebrates when Trash Mountain shrinks, only to have a front loader build it up again. "We can never get caught up, there is no running out of anything," said Quist. The sorting process is getting

clarified as they go forward. One sign of efficiency is the need for more dumpster sized recycling bins for sorted materials.

Safety glasses, gloves and Kevlar arm sleeves provide protection from scrapes and cuts.

Bad days are when they run into cat litter or dog droppings in a recycling bin. The crew pulls out face masks for the terrible smell.

Mike Halpaus is fully engaged in conquering Trash Mountain. He enjoys the



At the resorting bins, Cayla Peterson shows off the protective Kevlar sleeves that make it easier to pick through recycled materials.

job's physical nature and the challenge, and is most often seen on top of the latest dump of materials. He credits his physical endurance to the workouts he gets on the baseball team with his church.

Cayla Peterson was enjoying her first day and the friendly environment as she learned the bin system for plastics ranging



from bleach bottles to yogurt cups.

"You have to be on your toes. It takes a lot of hard work and makes you sweat," said Peterson. "I like to rise up to the challenge and I like to know that I am making a difference."

ProAct's crews have been self-sufficient. "When somebody's gone I go 'Loren, you're in charge,'" said Donovan. "We're happy that they're here. We think it's great."

When the business invited all employees out for an afternoon of golf, leaders insisted that ProAct crew members join them. "That's part of the team building ... the events we do," said Donovan.

ProAct Site Supervisor Sandy Vang said there's no room for error with the work. Schulz said the really small items are the most difficult, but with the large pieces, he pulls up a whole sheet and goes from there. The company treats the crews very well, Vang explains.



Loren Schulz removes excess material from letters to be used in signage.

Others who have attempted these jobs didn't come with the right attitude, and were distracted from the work, she explains. But,

DRAWINGS PART OF 'OUT OF THE BOX' APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT

One effort to take earning "outside the box" at ProAct in Eagan is taking form as an individual's artwork displays are being prepared for sale to the public.

The works, free form aesthetics inspired by nature, were created by Kathryn Field. Using micropens and colored pencils, Field draws her creations on a shoestring budget.

ProAct leaders are hopeful that an anonymous donation will help push the project forward. Proper matting and frames were needed, as well as a place to sell the art.

"We recognize the work you've done and we value your artwork so much" said Program Coordinator Charlotte Eastin, who was on hand for the check presentation.

A former art teacher and art education graduate of Minnesota State University,



Above left, Coordinator Charlotte Eastin, with artist Kathryn Field, center; and art community representative Marie Jensen. Field received an anonymous donation to help her market her work.

Mankato, Field has served as an arts and crafts peer mentor for the United Way and spent years volunteering. She has also contributed her talents to the Eagan Art Festival and, years ago, educated ProAct (then Owobopte) participants in different forms.

Some of Field's designs mimic organic "Fleur de Joli" floral images with dots and textures in underwater settings. Circles and partial circles are one of her signature forms.

"Charlotte's been phenomenal and encouraging," said Field. While others may go back to the drawing board, Field is often found at the drawing table. She's done other art projects at ProAct, and says she looks forward to coming to work there.

"This has been my dream, to have my art recognized," Field said.



Above and at right, some samples of Field's nature inspired works. Others are available online at proactinc.org



ProAct is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for employment planning, employee development, and organizational and community employment.

Programs funded in part by The Greater Twin Cities United Way, United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha & Pierce Counties and United Way of Hastings.

ProAct, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with more than 40 years of experience.

'AUSSIES' AND ANIMALS FOR TRIP WINNER

It was the "down under" opportunity of a lifetime for a ProAct consumer in Eagan, and it fell right into his lap.



John Hanneman met some interesting animals, and people, including these friendly and photogenic aboriginal actors.

John Hanneman was on vacation in California and was in the audience for a taping of The Ellen Degeneres Show. Degeneres was interviewing actress Nicole Kidman, who said she couldn't believe Ellen had never been to Australia. Excited, Degeneres gave everyone in the studio a trip to Australia, explains Robin Ahlman, program director at CareCo Apartments, Hanneman's residence.

Hanneman, resident travel coordinator Paula Pogatchnik and another consumer made the trip. "His arms went up in the air, and his eyes got big," she said.

The group saw kangaroos and wallabies, a Tasmanian devil, the Blue Mountains and went to an aboriginal center. But Hanneman's biggest thrill is always interacting with people, explained Pogatchnik, who has known him for 30 years. "No matter where he goes, he's a magnet drawing people in," she said.

While the ProAct consumer may nap at home, she said he never gets tired on trips. "When we get out there, it's endless energy."





PROACT

PROACT BRIEFS:

Vocational Services nearly double in past year

An improved job market and steady effort on the part of ProAct staff members has led to a nearly two-fold increase in activity with the Vocational department in Eagan

Vocational Coordinator Heather Deutschlaender said the nonprofit's quality of services has helped generate an increase in client referrals. "Our staff maintains positive relationships with both community businesses and our referral sources. In addition, our assessments offer a variety of sites and detailed reports," she said.

While the job market has improved greatly, she explains, efforts to build awareness of people with disabilities as a workforce are ongoing. One resource is the South Metro Community Partnership, a collaboration that works on hiring solutions for area businesses, which are seeking out skilled and qualified candidates through partner members.

Additionally, ProAct is offering new work assessment sites at Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington and at Best Western Plus Dakota Ridge in Eagan.

Overall expectations in the vocational area remain the same, to place more people in community jobs and match these jobs with interests, Deutschlaender said. The coordinator said ProAct has reached more businesses and established a positive reputation in that community.

Bird feeder effort receives \$2,500 Hudson Rotary gift



ProAct Job Developer Kyle Adams, left, and Coordinator Teresa Ducheneaux with attorney and Daybreak Rotary President James Johnson.

The Hudson Daybreak Rotary Club has provided \$2,500 to purchase supplies for a successful ProAct birdseed project where participants assemble wreaths. More than 1,000 have been distributed to date.

Quality bird seed is placed in custom designed molds with an appropriate bird-friendly adhesive for the seed to retain the mold of wreath, heart or animal designs. The project began about three years ago, and received Daybreak Rotary grants in 2011 and 2012. Incoming Daybreak Rotary President Garth Christensen, and his wife, Lou Stuesser, were instrumental in starting it. Their daughter Jessica attends ProAct's Life Opportunities program in Hudson.

"This project has just taken off," said Carolyn Dobis, program and services director of ProAct's Hudson and Eagan facilities. Earlier, grant dollars were used to purchase a refrigerator for seed supplies and assistive technology to make it possible for individuals at all skill levels to work on the project.

Several Hudson locations, the Purple Tree Fair Trade Gift Shop, Hudson Hospital, Hot Air Balloon Festival and the Hudson House have helped present the creations to the public. To learn more, contact Teresa Ducheneaux at 715-410-4216 or tducheneaux@proactinc.org.

Bag recycling program finds new partner in ProAct

When another provider couldn't fulfill a substantial plastic bag sorting contract, ProAct was asked to step in.

The Recycling Association

Minnesota coordinates the "It's in the Bag" program to collect plastic bags and packaging from multiple locations. ProAct began collecting at eight pickup points, which included grocery stores, a manufacturer, and the Dakota County Eco Site. It then sorts the material into several categories.



As a rule, the plastic must stretch four ways to be recyclable, explains Day Training Production Manager Jennifer Cavalier. Food bags and biodegradable bags are thrown out.

New equipment allows the nonprofit to produce large plastic bales to be sold directly to a recycler. In the end, the material is reused in plastic, no-maintenance decking boards. The operation will potentially employ up to 10 consumers each day.

Continued county requests for scanning

For several months Mary Ann Dohnalek and Ryan Kannel will prepare documents for scanning at Goodhue County offices. A job coach will handle the scanning.

This fits with the continuing effort to move paper files into the computers. Participants learn how to be flexible and to adapt. "This is a huge skill, not only in the work setting but in a social and life setting, as well," Osman said.

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Red Wing job developer expands Wisconsin reach

Kyle Adams has been appointed job developer at ProAct in Hudson, the nonprofit's only Wisconsin location. Adams will play the key role in finding employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

"Kyle's ability to connect with employers and to communicate the benefits provided by our workers has been crucial," said Sally Ogren, director of programs and services for ProAct in Red Wing. The southeastern Wisconsin native will also continue his job development work in Red Wing. He is a graduate of UW-Stout with bachelor's degrees in human development and family studies and has received specialized training.

Adams has found work for a number of people with disabilities in Pierce and Pepin counties, and now adds St. Croix County to his responsibilities. "Employers are finding that we offer a lot of continuing support, including job coaching and regular job site checks," said Adams. Those hiring people with disabilities typically find them to be more reliable, and dedicated, as well, he explained.

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DYNAMIC CASE MANAGER LIVES JOB

About seven years ago, Stephanie Osman was looking for a day job so she could attend rehearsals as an actor in the evenings. What she found was a place where her skills and passions could help others.

Often surrounded by people, the Eagan case manager and former group home worker displays hundreds of photos of ProAct participants above her desk, just steps away from the common area of ProAct's Day Training and Habilitation department. People enjoy them.

For Osman, this atmosphere is full of energy. She comes from a large family and finds quiet times "suffocating."

"It's hard for me to leave the job here," said Osman. "I'm thinking about things constantly when I go home, which is why I can tell you I can do this forever."

Her drama skills have found their expressions in "ProAct Playhouse," a group she coordinates for public performances along with her brother, Matt Briggs, who is also a case manager.

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said.

The ability to stand up in front of a crowd takes courage. "They are on their own and in control of their own destiny," she said. "Matt and I are backstage."

Uninterrupted time is a rarity in Osman's world, but that's part of the caring environment she's accustomed to. People need interaction. "Even just looking up, making eye contact and saying hello can make their day and now their structure is set,

Quality control, from page 1 organization like ProAct. He handled different tasks, and valued their contribution to overall production.

"It is less about the people and more about how you break down the tasks to get the work done," said Hovey. His challenge that day involved a 12-foot product, how it would be stored and handled. "It is looking at how stuff comes and goes."

Hovey and his wife live in Plum City,



Surrounded by ProAct consumers, sometimes only in picture form, Stephanie Osman pours out her talents to benefit people receiving services, who rise to the challenges she presents.

they are stable and they can go to work," she said. Short cafeteria visits with people on her caseload of 27 are also beneficial.

Case managers primarily rely on human service technicians to carry out programs and objectives. Keeping a positive rapport with them is crucial, she says, and believing in each client's plan.



"Every case manager, every HST, brings crafts and niches so our people get a variety of life skills," said Osman. "People are into botany, woodworking, crafts, there are artists. Mary (Stoyke) is a musician. We have this plethora of talent- an amazing staff."



Putting her personal trainer talents to work Osman takes consumers through challenging exercises as part of her "Personal Best" class.

She credits her success to examples provided by longer term staff members. Just as Osman learned characters for plays on stage, she imitates the more experienced professionals around her.

Osman does really well with young women who tend to have more drama in their lives, explains Case Manager Ron Hernandez. She lets people know that she understands them and helps figure out a way to deal with problems, "and they feel comfortable," he said.

For those who have followed her acting, the case manager's ability to gain experience and grow is well illustrated by her involvement in Patsy Cline productions in Hudson. She now plays the lead role, but her first appearance was as a tree.



Hovey doing time studies for work floor bagging activity.

Wisconsin, close to where she grew up, and they are enjoying the small town and close community.

His hobby revolves around acoustic guitars and he is a seven-year member of the "Geezer Rock" band. This helps support his guitar collection (he has seven). Hovey is also in training to be an EMT for his community.

Recognition banquets near

Red Wing/Zumbrota— September 27, Treasure Island

Eagan/Hudson— October 4, Prom Center, Oakdale



Gigi's Playhouse, from page 1

stuff they do. My experience is with autism," she said.

Angela Lopez, another mom, comes with her son William almost every week. It's different from other play areas as she doesn't get weird looks from other parents who notice William's disability. "It's a space where I can have my son come and play. It's open and I can afford it- it's free," she said. Meeting adults with disabilities adds to the experience. "It's nice to see them, and interact with them, too. There's something special."

Becker's smile and polite manner, are no doubt, appealing. He still gets compliments on his shirt.



Danielle Hurst engages Rodrigo in a game of ball as part of open play time at Gigi's.

EDUCATOR'S ADVOCACY SHINES THROUGH

For Dr. Barbara Rebhuhn, the question has always been, "Is this a quality opportunity for the individual with disabilities?" Her tenure on ProAct's board and that of its predecessor, Interstate Rehabilitation Center, goes back to 1998.

"I'm not worried about making money," said Rebhuhn, who lives on the Pierce County side of River Falls, Wisconsin. Retired from a lifetime of teaching in special education and psychology, she continues to mentor students, past and present, and teach part-time.

Rebhuhn said she believes strongly that as much as possible, adults with disabilities should be able to live as independently as their non-disabled peers.

"My interaction with the parents of children with disabilities has had the greatest influence on me," said Rebhuhn. "I truly am awed (by them)." The experiences provided understanding, made her more empathetic and willing to go to bat for the families. Some of the parents who had special education children in the Hudson School District where she worked

were her former students at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Services for people with disabilities receive less funding in Wisconsin than its neighbor to the west, she explains. Financing is tight because people didn't plan for the high number of individuals who would need services, Rebhuhn said. Some may only be able to attend ProAct for a partial week, which makes it harder on the organization.

With this in mind, the focus on quality services and attracting new clients will remain centered on ProAct's Hudson facility, instead of exploring additional facilities.

Speaking of the success of placing clients in jobs in rural areas of western Wisconsin, Rebhuhn said people there are more accepting and willing to take a chance on someone with a disability because they often know a family member. "The parents are always members of the community, so it's natural that they (people with disabilities) are members of the working community as well. I think that's terrific," she said. Some Pierce County families go back more than 100 years.

Rebhuhn continues to have an interest in autism and Asperger's Syndrome. She said it's been difficult for experts to come up with answers to growing autism numbers.



Board member Dr. Barbara Rebhuhn always asks how participants will benefit from ProAct's effort and priorities.



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call Cathy at 651-289-3170



Welcome to People Achieving,

an inside look at the activities and programs of ProAct, Inc., serving people with disabilities in and around the Twin Cities, in communities along the Mississippi and in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

Comments welcome, alternative formats available— Upon request, this publication is available in alternate languages and formats. Comments are welcome. Contact Sheena Henry at 651-289-3149, shenry@proactinc.org.

THEY PUT THE TEAM IN TEAMWORK TO HAVE A HAPPY CUSTOMER

It has been three or four years since the weekly cleaning for Sylvander Heating in Red Wing was restarted, following a break of several years. When approached by ProAct, owner Theresa Gillman considered the offer to restart the service. "I did not care when they came every week but I wanted the same people and the same job coach," said Gillman. In her mind, it was too hard on the crew and the business to not see the same people every week.



From left, Amy Garlitch and Jeremy Lundberg in the mirror, Shawn Theis vacuuming, Brian Anderson mopping and Jeremy with Teresa Gillman

generation in her family to head the company of 20 employees, started by her grandfather in 1930.

She enjoys the group and on special occasions there is a pizza party that is arranged ahead of time. "We have gotten to know them," said Gillman.



The team rolls in with coach Dave Dankers who has been with ProAct for over three years.

In the van when driving to the job site there is banter about who will do what job. He notices that the crew changes as the strengths

and weaknesses evolve.

To stick with the "same crew" bargain, Dankers has set up regular substitutes when needed. The crew



cleans the whole office except for the workshop. Dankers came from VASA, a care



facility for children to adolescents, after 23 years of watching many of his crew grow up. "It makes me proud to see them get over some

severe behavior and see them adjust to the least restrictive environment possible," said Dankers. "They all know what is expected. We need to do a good job to please the customer."

Dankers' focus is to get the job done and to have some fun in the process. You make corrections on the spot and some are made in the van. "You did a good job ... but next time ..."

"Theresa is wonderful," said Dankers. "She is there to say 'Hello' and 'Good-bye.' The team likes the verbal praise. They aim to please and some can move along unsupervised. They are very focused on their work."



Job Coach Dave Dankers for the Sylvander crew.

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